

DOC HASTINGS, WA
CHAIRMAN
DON YOUNG, AK
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TN
LOUIE GOHMERT, TX
ROB BISHOP, UT
DOUG LAMBORN, CO
ROBERT J. WITTMAN, VA
PAUL C. BROUN, GA
JOHN FLEMING, LA
MIKE COFFMAN, CO
TOM MCCLINTOCK, CA
GLENN THOMPSON, PA
JEFF DENHAM, CA
DAN BENISHEK, MI
DAVID RIVERA, FL
JEFF DUNCAN, SC
SCOTT R. TIPTON, CO
PAUL A. GOSAR, AZ
RAUL R. LABRADOR, ID
KRISTI L. NOEM, SD
STEVE SOUTHERLAND II, FL
BILL FLORES, TX
ANDY HARRIS, MD
JEFFREY M. LANDRY, LA
CHARLES J. "CHUCK" FLEISCHMANN, TN
JON RUNYAN, NJ
BILL JOHNSON, OH

TODD YOUNG
CHIEF OF STAFF

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

EDWARD J. MARKEY, MA
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER
DALE E. KILDEE, MI
PETER A. DEFazio, OR
ENI F.H. FALOMAVAEGA, AS
FRANK PALLONE, JR., NJ
GRACE F. NAPOLITANO, CA
RUSH D. HOLT, NJ
RAUL M. GRIJALVA, AZ
MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO, GU
JIM COSTA, CA
DAN BOREN, OK
GREGORIO KILLI CAMACHO SABLÁN, CNMI
MARTIN HEINRICH, NM
BEN RAY LUJÁN, NM
DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN, VI
JOHN P. SARBANES, MD
BETTY SUTTON, OH
NIKI TSONGAS, MA
PEDRO R. PIERLUISI, PR
JOHN GARAMENDI, CA
COLLEEN W. HANABUSA, HI

JEFFREY DUNCAN
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

Opening Statement of
Representative Jeff Landry
Committee on Natural Resources
On Monday, April 18, 2011 at 9:00 a.m.
Houma-Terrebonne Civic Center, Houma, Louisiana
Natural Resources Field Hearing on:

"Gulf of Mexico: A Focus on Community Recovery and News Response Technology."

Chairman Hastings, welcome to Louisiana and thank you for your leadership and decision to bring the Committee to Houma.

I thank the hosts of today's hearing: Terrebonne Parish President Michele Claude and Houma-Terrebonne Civic Center Director Janel Ricca.

I also thank the many people from Coastal Louisiana here today for attending this important hearing and sharing their opinions on our jobs, our coast, and our way of life.

On Wednesday, we will mark the one-year anniversary of the tragic Deepwater Horizon disaster. April 20, 2010 marked one of the darkest days in our history.

All of us along the Gulf Coast continue to mourn the 11 lives lost that fateful day, and we pray for their families and loved ones.

As we grieve, we also yearn for the day when our oil and gas workers can return to work and provide for their families.

When these men and women return to the platforms, they must return to a workplace that is safer than it was before. Due to the efforts of Helix, the Marine Well Containment Company, and all those who drill offshore, we're getting there. The drilling industry is safer than ever before.

However, as positive as these efforts are, they really only address the protection of the environment; these efforts don't address the safety of the lives of the men and women working on the platforms who are delivering the energy for tomorrow's economy.

As the Representative for our oil and gas workers, I am bound to protect the men and women working on the rigs. They are not only my constituents; they are also my neighbors, my fellow parishioners, and some of my closest friends.

As you all know, I am and have been fully committed to fighting for their jobs. I could not look them in the eye or myself in the mirror – if, at the same time, I am not fighting to make sure they

come home to their families after they spent weeks out in the Gulf working to provide the energy our nation needs to create jobs.

For this reason, I introduced H.R. 1572 – the “Offshore Installation Emergency Evacuation Act” – legislation that would require a standby vessel to be stationed within 12 miles of offshore drilling installations.

This bill recognizes that the most valuable resource in the Gulf of Mexico is not the oil and gas underneath the Gulf, but the men and women who are willing to risk their lives to extract it. Congressman Tauzin recognized this fact 25 years ago when he introduced similar legislation.

I have spent countless hours talking to roughnecks asking them about drilling safety in a post-Deepwater Horizon world. They have expressed the fact that the lessons learned from the accident were immediately incorporated by the industry into the yearly, monthly, and daily safety meetings that they participate in. What concerns them are the factors which have not been addressed.

You see when an accident occurs, we tend to focus only on the direct cause of the accident. We sometimes fail to look around to see if the accident does not bring into focus additional ancillary dangers. Again, we have spent countless hours and millions of dollars on studies focusing on protecting the environment, but have not focused on measures to protect the lives of the men and women who have dedicated themselves to producing our nation’s energy.

Congressman Tauzin is not the only one who believed these regulations are necessary. Last year, Lt. Commander Michael Odom of the United States Coast Guard told a joint USCG-MMS board investigating the Deepwater Horizon accident that standby vessels should be required. This sentiment is also supported by the official reports from the United States Coast Guard’s Marine Board and National Transportation Safety Board’s investigation of previous accidents.

I recognize that standby vessels are not a complete solution to drilling emergencies. However, helicopters and lifeboats are not complete solutions either. We need a third leg of the worker protection stool, a reliable vessel on scene that can quickly assist in times of emergency.

Remember that Deepwater Horizon was equipped with a full complement of lifeboats and life rafts, yet men still made the unimaginable decision to jump for their lives.

Had the Damon Bankston not been delivering drilling mud, these men would have been in the water for at least one hour and seven minutes – the time it took for the first Coast Guard helicopter to reach the rig.

The Deepwater Horizon accident happened at night, and the helicopters spent a lot of fuel just to get to there. There is no guarantee that these assets would have been able to locate or recover all the men who jumped over the rail. My legislation would guarantee that every man who commits his life to extracting our nation’s energy is met by an equal commitment that, no matter what might happen on the rig, a vessel will be waiting to safely take him home.

I yield back the balance of my time.